

REMARKS

This amendment is filed in response to the Office Action dated March 8, 2007. Claims 6 - 7 are amended. Claims 6 - 11 are in the case and claim 11 stands withdrawn from consideration.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claim 7 has been amended to address the Examiner's concern regarding a perceived ambiguity in formula (III). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the §112 rejection are respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(a) and 102(e) as being anticipated by Pallett et al. (WO 02/21919). Claim 6 has been amended to indicate that the herbicidal composition comprises an organic phosphate, phosphonate or phosphinate adjuvant at a concentration of less than 0.5% v/v. Pallett teaches (page 8, example C1) a composition in which 0.5% w/v ethoxylated tristeryl phenol phosphate is present. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of the amended claim is novel in view of Pallett et al. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under §§ 102(a) - (e) are respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 6 - 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Rusch (WO 93/04585) in view of Wichert et al. (WO 02/19823) ("Wichert").

More specifically, the teaching of Rusch is limited to the combination of certain alkyl substituted phosphonates and phosphinates with specific sugar beet herbicides. However, Rusch does not contain any specific or unambiguous teaching that phosphonates and phosphinates are capable of improving the efficacy 2-(substituted benzoyl)-1,3- cyclohexanedione compounds, for example mesotrione, which are used in corn as required by the present claims.

Recognizing the deficiencies of Rush, the Examiner cites Wichert. However, Wichert does not remedy the deficiencies of Rush. Specifically, Wichert discloses that the mesotrione formulations referred to may optionally further comprise other additives, for example phosphate buffers to control pH. The fact that the use of a phosphate buffer is purely optional is supported by the examples provided in Wichert, none of which recite the use of a phosphate buffer. Thus, it can be seen that the purpose for the optional inclusion of phosphates in the herbicidal compositions taught by Wichert is simply to act as a pH buffer. Accordingly, one of ordinary skill in the art would

not have any reasonable expectation that the modification of Rush as suggested by the Examiner (i.e., replacement of the specific sugar beet herbicides of Rush with the mesotrione herbicide of Wichert) would result in a beneficial and synergistic herbicidal composition.

It is seen, therefore, that the teaching in the Rusch reference requires a well defined interpretation which interpretation is distinct from the instant invention and from the characteristics of the Wichert reference. These distinctions are meaningful such that they do not raise a *prima facie* case of obviousness requiring the submission of a showing of unexpected results. Rather, the noted distinctions between the cited references and the present claims as well as the attendant benefits of the instantly claimed compositions should be viewed in terms of overcoming the Examiner's obviousness rejection.

Nonetheless, Applicants respectfully submit that in reaching a conclusion of obviousness, the Patent and Trademark Office also must consider the "invention as a whole," which includes evidence of the invention's unexpected results. See In re Margolis, 228 USPQ 940 (Fed. Cir. 1986). More specifically, the data on pages 11 – 12 of the specification establishes that the combination in accordance with the present invention exhibits superior herbicidal effect. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the only motivation for modifying the teachings of Rush in view of Wichert to arrive at the claimed compositions and methods can only be accomplished by improper reliance on Applicants' disclosure. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103 rejection of claims 6 – 10 are earnestly requested.

Applicants note that the claims 6 – 8 and 6 – 10 have been provisionally rejected on the ground of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over the claims of copending applications 11/000,700 and 10/517,872, respectively. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's contention, but will consider the filing of a terminal disclaimer once allowable subject matter has been identified by the Examiner.

With the amendment and explanations presented herein, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejection of the claims and issue a Notice of Allowance. Applicants invite the Examiner to telephone the undersigned attorney of record if the Examiner feels such a call would advance the prosecution of the above-identified application.

Respectfully submitted,

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